

## Journey of Success: Exploring Strategies and Resilience among Successful Criminologists

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### ABSTRACT

The study examined the strategies and resilience of successful criminologists during board examination preparation, focusing on nine purposively selected participants from Misamis Occidental. Utilizing an interview guide for data collection, the study found that participants emphasized the importance of emotional support, mentorship, and effective study techniques in overcoming the challenges of exam preparation. Their experiences underscored the significance of family, mentors, and peers in providing both academic guidance and emotional encouragement. The study's findings suggest the importance of comprehensive support systems in educational institutions to assist students in managing exam stress and achieving their academic goals in criminology. The findings revealed the demand for self-discipline, disciplined schedules, and intrinsic drive to attain academic success, with participants dedicating substantial hours to structured study routines and emphasizing the role of intrinsic motivation in maintaining focus and resilience. Overcoming barriers and enhancing exam preparation required a multifaceted approach, which included incorporating review center materials with personal notes to reinforce foundational knowledge, receiving emotional support from mentors and family to combat self-doubt and stress, and employing efficient study techniques such as peer collaboration and time management to optimize learning and performance. The study concluded that a thorough exam preparation strategy is strongly influenced by effective time management and self-discipline, intrinsic motivation, integrating review materials with personal notes, emotional resilience, mentorship, and peer collaboration, all of which lead to academic achievement. To help students prepare for exams, educational institutions should create customized study schedules, improve discipline, incorporate organized materials, and offer extensive support systems.

**Keywords:** Criminologist; Discipline; Encouragement; Examination; Motivation; Passers; Resilience; Strategies; Time management.

### 1. Introduction

The theoretical knowledge, practical abilities, and ethical awareness that professionals need to function within the legal and moral parameters of the criminal justice system are often assessed by the criminology licensure examination (Albina et al., 2022). People who want to work in the field of criminology or get licensed as criminologists must pass the Criminology Board Examination as proof of their expertise in the necessary topics. It demonstrates a criminologist's dedication to upholding professional standards and guarantees their capacity to make valuable contributions to the fields of criminal justice and criminology (Asuncion, 2019). Board examinations are important in maintaining the standards of competence and quality across a wide range of professional fields, serving as a rigorous assessment tool to validate individuals' expertise and ensuring a solid foundation for their future careers (Crespi, 2019). A criminologist's success is a tribute to devotion and hard effort, pushing college students to pursue their dreams without fear (Liu et al., 2019; Slatten, 2021). Not only did these extraordinary criminologists pass their board examinations, but they also proved that hard effort and a commitment for justice can lead to successful careers (Sembiring et al., 2020; Novitasari et al., 2020).

As they begin their board exam preparations, college students should keep in mind that each day of dedicated study and practice puts them closer to their academic goals (Albina et al., 2022; Barreda, 2022). The information obtained and abilities perfected during this critical phase of preparation set the groundwork for college students to someday join the ranks of professional criminologists, having a positive influence on society (Pardinas et al., 2023; Camal, 2023). These aspiring criminologists may boldly enter into their future professions, knowing that their hard work will be a force for positive change, if they remain dedicated to their studies and have a vision of a safer and

more just society. As they grow, these committed students-turned-criminologists will realize that the route to success entails not just making a difference, but also continually changing and learning to remain at the forefront of their industry (Asuncion, 2019; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2021).

This critical stage necessitates not just considerable knowledge but also the capacity to sustain consistently excellent performance across all areas, making the board exam a genuine test of a candidate's entire mastery of criminology (Laput & Teves, 2023; Taguba, 2022). To pass the difficult criminologist license test, a candidate must acquire an overall average score of at least 75% while guaranteeing that no individual topic score falls below the 60% level. However, if a candidate achieves the needed overall average but falls short in any topic with a score less than sixty percent (60%), they will be compelled to repeat that course, indicating a significant stumbling block on their path to become a licensed criminologist (Asuncion, 2019; Albina et al., 2022). Furthermore, these difficulties go beyond academic ability, embracing the mental and emotional fortitude necessary to deal with the pressure, self-doubt, and many hours of preparation that frequently accompany this hard examination (Blomberg & Turanovic, 2023; Rogers & Rogers, 2023). Candidates must summon their inner strength, tenacity, and steadfast resolve to endure and eventually prevail in their pursuit of a criminologist's license in the face of these complex hurdles.

This research is purposely designed to unveil the techniques and preparation made by successful criminology board takers in this professionalized board examination. People haven't fully looked into the specific things successful criminologists do, how they stay strong in tough times, and what happens to their careers in the long run after passing the criminologist board exams. We still don't know enough about how the strategies people use to prepare for criminologist board exams and their personal resilience (the ability to bounce back from challenges) work together in achieving success. The importance of this research is that it may help future criminology board candidates navigate the emotional and psychological challenges by offering insightful tips and techniques. Hoping to provide them with a strong foundation for success in board exams and in their careers afterward.

## 2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative research method and a phenomenological methodology, investigating the everyday experiences of individuals while suspending researchers' preconceived assumptions about the phenomenon. Focusing on describing and understanding the essence and significance of these experiences, the study aimed to comprehend the lived experiences of Misamis University Criminology graduates in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental, Northern Mindanao. Prior to the interviews, permission was obtained from the Dean of the Misamis University College of Criminology to interview successful Criminologists Licensure Board Examination passers from the University. After receiving approval, 10 participants were randomly selected and consent was secured for voluntary participation. Appointments were scheduled, and participants were assured of the confidentiality and security of their data. The study consisted of interviews with 10 successful Criminologists Licensure Board Examination passers who met the following criteria: they graduated from Misamis University, were impacted by Republic Act 11131, and voluntarily participated. An interview guide was used, including questions about name, age, civil status, gender, and core questions about their strategies and resilience in preparing

for the exam. Responses were recorded using recording devices. The research adhered to ethical standards, prioritizing participant safety and privacy. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, detailing the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, benefits, and the right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality of all collected data was maintained, particularly personal information, in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173).

### 3. Results and Discussions

#### 3.1. Profile of the Participants

A total of 9 criminologists who graduated at Misamis University voluntarily participated in the study through a face-to-face interview. The year the participants passed Criminologists Board Examination ranges from 2022-2024. All of them are single and have passed after the application of R.A. 11131 to the Criminologists Board Examination.

**Table 1.** Profile of the Participants

| Code name | Civil Status | Year passed the board examination |
|-----------|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| P1        | Single       | 2022                              |
| P2        | Single       | 2022                              |
| P3        | Single       | 2024                              |
| P4        | Single       | 2022                              |
| P5        | Single       | 2024                              |
| P6        | Single       | 2024                              |
| P7        | Single       | 2023                              |
| P8        | Single       | 2022                              |
| P9        | Single       | 2024                              |

#### 3.2. Time Management and Study Routine

Time management and study routines are pivotal components in the academic success of students preparing for rigorous examinations. Effective time management involves not only planning and scheduling study sessions but also ensuring that the allocated time is used efficiently and productively (Bruso et al., 2020). A well-structured study routine can help in systematically covering all necessary topics, preventing last-minute cramming and reducing stress. By establishing consistent study habits and adhering to a disciplined schedule, students can enhance their focus, retention, and overall performance. The significance of these practices is evident in the varied yet strategic approaches adopted by students who aim to optimize their study time and achieve their academic goals. Participants 1, 2, 3, and 8 demonstrate a strong commitment to structured time management and study routines, which they believe are essential for their success. Participant 1 has a meticulously planned daily schedule,

dedicating specific hours in the morning, afternoon, and evening to study, often pushing past midnight to maximize their study time. Similarly, Participant 2 focuses on creating weekly schedules, emphasizing comprehensive reading and comprehension for one subject at a time. Participant 3 goes even further by dedicating up to 15 hours a day to studying, starting as early as 4 a.m. This intense routine shows their determination and discipline. Participant 8 also highlights the importance of an early start, beginning at 4 a.m., and incorporates breaks and focused study sessions on one subject per month. Despite the variations in their schedules, all participants share a common theme of disciplined and strategic time management to ensure thorough preparation for their exams. This collective approach underlines the importance of structured study routines in achieving academic success. These are evident in the responses of the participants during the interview:

*"I implemented a daily study routine from 8 to 11 a.m. in the morning, 1 to 4 p.m. in the afternoon, and 8 to 10 p.m. in the evening. But sometimes it even exceeds 1 a.m. on the next day because I want to push my limitations." (P1)*

*"I made a schedule; for example, for the whole week, I will read and review all the topics for one subject or area, not just with simple reading but also with reading comprehension." (P2)*

*"In the last 2 months, I read for 10–15 hours a day. I wake up at 4 am, read until 6 am, and then have breakfast. After that, I go back to reading at 8 a.m." (P3)*

*"I prioritize the significance of studying, prayer, and concentration to effectively absorb the study material. Crafting a study schedule can be challenging due to the multitude of subjects. To manage this, I dedicate a month to focus on one subject, commencing my study sessions at 4:00 am, taking breaks intermittently, and gradually covering all topics." (P8)*

Time management and study routines are essential strategies for students preparing for high-stakes exams, such as board examinations (Nicolas & Arambulo, 2023). Establishing a daily study routine helps create a structured environment that fosters consistent and effective learning. Students often allocate specific times for different subjects, ensuring a comprehensive review of all necessary material (Caulfield, 2023). For instance, a typical study routine might include morning, afternoon, and evening sessions, with breaks in between to prevent burnout and enhance focus. The importance of starting early cannot be overstated, as spreading study sessions over several months allows for deeper understanding and retention of information. Furthermore, incorporating longer study sessions closer to the exam date can help reinforce knowledge and boost confidence. Consistency in these routines ensures that students cover all topics methodically, reducing the risk of last-minute cramming and associated stress.

Another critical aspect of effective study routines is the balance between intensity and relaxation. Intensive study periods, such as studying for up to 15 hours a day in the final months before an exam, require careful planning to avoid mental fatigue (Caldwell et al., 2019). Breaks and relaxation activities, such as short naps or light recreational activities, are crucial for maintaining mental sharpness and preventing burnout. Additionally, incorporating elements like early morning study sessions, which align with the exam schedule, can help students acclimate to the timing and conditions they will face on the actual exam day. Strategic scheduling also includes

focusing on one subject at a time for a week or more, which allows for immersive learning and better retention. Ultimately, disciplined time management and well-structured study routines are fundamental to mastering the vast amount of material covered in board examinations, leading to higher success rates and reduced anxiety for students (O'Donnell, 2020).

The implications of the results suggest that effective time management and structured study routines are crucial for students aiming for success in high-stakes exams. The data reveals that students who implement consistent and well-planned study schedules are able to cover more material comprehensively, retain information better, and experience reduced stress levels (Jones, 2019).

This indicates that educational institutions and educators should emphasize the importance of developing personalized study routines and time management skills as part of their preparatory programs. Additionally, providing guidance on balancing intensive study periods with adequate breaks can further enhance students' performance and well-being, ultimately leading to higher academic achievement and more positive educational outcomes.

### 3.3. Self-Discipline and Motivation

The participants collectively highlight the paramount importance of self-discipline in their journey to passing the board exams (Schulz, 2021; Nkarichia, J.K., 2021). P1 and P2 explicitly state that self-discipline is the most significant factor contributing to their success. Their experiences underscore the necessity of maintaining a consistent and focused approach to their studies. P4 echoes this sentiment by emphasizing that without discipline, the effort spent on reading and studying is rendered ineffective. This shared perspective reveals a common understanding among the participants that self-discipline is the foundation of effective study habits and academic achievement. Additionally, P9's experience further illustrates the extent to which self-discipline can be exercised. Initially dedicating 3-5 hours a day to studying, P9 significantly increased this to 15 hours a day over the past two months, demonstrating a remarkable level of commitment and discipline. This drastic change underscores the critical role that self-discipline plays in pushing one's boundaries and maximizing study time. The participants' collective responses highlight a unanimous recognition of self-discipline as a vital strategy for success in board exams, with each participant showcasing varying degrees of this trait in their preparation routines. These are evident in the response of the participants during the interview:

*"I believed that self-discipline had the most significant impact on my success in passing the board exam." (P1)*

*"As a reviewee, the strategy that significantly impacts my success in passing the board exam is self-discipline." (P2)*

*"Discipline is crucial because without it, no matter how much you read or study, it will be all for nothing." (P4)*

*"I used to dedicate 3-5 hours to reading, followed by collecting review materials. However, for the past 2 months, I've committed to studying for 15 hours a day." (P9)*

Self-discipline and motivation emerge as pivotal factors in the success of students preparing for board exams (Briones, 2021; Tise et al., 2023). Participants emphasize that maintaining a high level of self-discipline allows

them to adhere to their study schedules and sustain their focus over extended periods. This dedication is seen as the cornerstone of their ability to assimilate vast amounts of information and manage their study time effectively (Shi & Qu, 2022). The commitment to rigorous study routines, sometimes extending to 15 hours a day, highlights the role of self-discipline in pushing personal limits and achieving academic goals. Such discipline ensures that study plans are not only created but also consistently followed, thereby maximizing study efficiency and effectiveness.

Moreover, the intrinsic motivation to succeed drives these students to maintain their disciplined routines. The belief in the critical role of self-discipline reflects an understanding that mere effort is insufficient without a structured and disciplined approach. Motivation acts as the catalyst that sustains this discipline, particularly during challenging times (Padayachee, 2021). It encourages persistence and resilience, essential traits for navigating the demanding and often stressful preparation period for board exams. Overall, the combination of self-discipline and motivation forms a synergistic relationship that significantly contributes to academic success.

The results underscore the critical importance of fostering self-discipline and motivation among students preparing for high-stakes exams. Educational programs and instructors should focus on strategies to enhance these traits, such as setting realistic goals, developing personalized study plans, and encouraging self-regulatory behaviors. By cultivating a disciplined study environment and providing motivational support, educators can help students achieve their full academic potential. Furthermore, these findings suggest that self-discipline and motivation are not only essential for exam preparation but also for lifelong learning and professional development, highlighting the broader significance of these qualities in achieving long-term success.

### **3.4. Utilization of Study Materials and Resources**

The participants emphasize the importance of utilizing both review center materials and personal notes from their college years as pivotal resources for their board exam preparation (Zhang & Bray, 2020). P1 and P6 specifically mention utilizing materials provided by the Dean and the Review Centre, alongside their notes from their college years. This combination of structured review center materials and personalized college notes appears to provide a comprehensive study approach, allowing them to reinforce foundational knowledge while focusing on key exam topics (Nakayama et al., 2021; Albina et al., 2022).

P2 and P5 also highlight the significance of the review center materials, noting that these resources are tailored to align with their curriculum and exam expectations. P2 finds key questions from the review center particularly helpful, suggesting a strategic approach to mastering potential exam questions. Similarly, P5's focus on review center materials indicates a reliance on structured guidance to streamline their study process. The consistent mention of review center resources across participants underscores the perceived value of these materials in providing targeted, curriculum-aligned content that enhances their study efficiency and exam readiness (Jacobs et al., 2023; Alam, 2023). These are evident in the responses of the participants during the interview:

*"The one that I used as my study materials is from the head of the review centre I was enrolled with, and I also used my notes from my 1st to 4th year of college." (P1)*

*"The study materials or resources I found helpful are the key questions that came from the review center." (P2)*

*"Since I have a review center, I focus on the materials they provide because they align with our curriculum." (P5)*

*"The resources I have utilized from the first to fourth year, along with the CTSS books provided and the review materials from his review center, have been invaluable." (P6)*

The integration of review center materials and personal college notes emerges as a prevalent strategy among board exam candidates. This dual approach leverages structured resources from review centers and individualized notes from their college years. By combining these resources, candidates can reinforce their foundational knowledge while targeting key exam topics. Review center materials are noted for their alignment with the curriculum and exam expectations, offering targeted content that enhances study efficiency (Kandiko Howson & Kingsbury, 2023). This strategy allows candidates to strategically focus on potential exam questions and streamline their study process, emphasizing the value of structured guidance in preparing for the board exams.

Additionally, the use of review center materials provides candidates with a standardized framework that ensures comprehensive coverage of exam topics. These resources are designed to consolidate and clarify complex subject matter, helping candidates to develop a thorough understanding of the material. By supplementing these materials with personal notes from their college years, candidates can tailor their study approach to their individual learning needs and preferences (Ginja & Chen, 2020). This personalized combination allows them to revisit and reinforce concepts learned during their academic studies, ensuring a well-rounded preparation for the board exams.

Moreover, the emphasis on review center materials reflects a broader trend in board exam preparation, where candidates prioritize structured resources that offer a clear roadmap to success. These materials often include practice questions and mock exams that simulate the actual testing environment, helping candidates to familiarize themselves with exam formats and time constraints (Knoch, U., Huisman et al., 2020; Domisloovic et al., 2023). As a result, candidates can approach their studies strategically, identifying and addressing any gaps in their knowledge while gaining confidence in their ability to perform well on the exams.

The widespread adoption of combining review center materials with personal college notes in board exam preparation underscores the evolving strategies of candidates towards achieving exam success (Ghamrawi et al., 2023). This approach not only enhances study efficiency by providing targeted, curriculum-aligned content but also promotes a deeper understanding of foundational concepts through personalized study methods. The structured guidance offered by review centers supports candidates in navigating the complexities of exam expectations, potentially improving their performance outcomes. As this trend continues, it suggests a shift towards more strategic and comprehensive study approaches that may influence future educational practices and the development of board exam preparation resources.

### **3.5. Support Systems and External Encouragement**

Participants P4, P7, P8, and P9 all shared significant personal experiences and strategies during their board exam preparation. P4's account of experiencing self-doubt and turning to prayer highlights a common emotional response to the stress of exams. This sentiment resonates with P8, who found counsel from family and mentors invaluable during challenging times. Both emphasize the importance of emotional support and spiritual guidance

in overcoming exam anxiety. P7, on the other hand, points out the role of mentors in their academic department as crucial influences, echoing P8's reliance on guidance. Meanwhile, P9's determination to pass the exam in one attempt reflects a shared motivation among these participants to overcome personal challenges and achieve their academic goals. These responses underscore the diverse yet interconnected ways in which candidates navigate the emotional and academic rigors of board exam preparation. These are evident in the responses of the participants during the interview:

*"During the exam, I experienced self-doubt, especially when I read the first question on the first day...I cried, then I prayed to the Lord to take care of me, then I just continued answering." (P4)*

*"My ultimate mentors are the professors in the department of criminology. Furthermore, while the practice exams are difficult, the real exam is simpler, based on my experience." (P7)*

*"Seeking counsel from my parents, mentors, and uncle proved invaluable during such trying times." (P8)*

*"My motivation to pass the exam in one sitting came from not wanting to retake it in spite of all the difficulties and circumstances in my life." (P9)*

Participants in the interview shared a variety of personal experiences and strategies related to their board exam preparation. Many described experiencing self-doubt and stress, highlighting the emotional challenges that accompany exams. They emphasized the significant role of emotional support from family and mentors in overcoming these difficulties. Additionally, participants underscored the importance of spiritual guidance, which helped them navigate the emotional rigors of exam preparation (Taylor & Collins, 2022).

Furthermore, participants highlighted the critical influence of mentors within their academic departments. They spoke about seeking guidance from mentors to navigate complex academic requirements and manage the stress associated with exams (Cox et al., 2021). This reliance on mentors not only provided academic advice but also offered crucial emotional support and encouragement during challenging times. Moreover, participants expressed a strong determination to succeed, sharing their commitment to passing the exam on their first attempt. This determination reflects a common motivation among candidates to achieve their academic goals despite facing personal challenges.

In addition to emotional and mentorship support, participants also emphasized the importance of effective study strategies and time management. Many shared specific techniques they used to optimize their study sessions, such as creating detailed study schedules, utilizing mnemonic devices, and practicing past exam papers. These strategies helped participants feel more confident and prepared, enhancing their ability to perform well under exam conditions. Moreover, participants discussed the impact of peer support and collaborative learning. They highlighted the benefits of studying with peers, sharing resources, and discussing challenging topics together. This collaborative approach not only facilitated a deeper understanding of the material but also provided a sense of camaraderie and mutual encouragement during the stressful exam preparation period (Wang & Zhang, 2021). The combination of emotional support, mentorship, effective study strategies, and peer collaboration played crucial

roles in helping participants navigate the challenges of board exam preparation and achieve their academic goals (Atkins et al., 2020).

The insights from participants underscore the multifaceted nature of board exam preparation, where emotional resilience, mentorship, effective study techniques, and peer collaboration all contribute significantly to success (Chandrasekera et al., 2024). These findings suggest that educational institutions and support networks should prioritize providing comprehensive support systems that address both the academic and emotional needs of students. By fostering a supportive environment that includes mentorship programs, peer learning opportunities, and resources for emotional well-being, institutions can better equip students to manage exam stress and achieve their academic aspirations (Salman et al., 2023). Additionally, these insights highlight the importance of recognizing and addressing the diverse challenges students face during exam preparation, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and effective learning experience.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that effective time management and structured study routines are essential for students preparing for high-stakes exams, as they lead to better material retention and reduced stress. Self-discipline and intrinsic motivation were found to be foundational for successful board exam preparation, fostering sustained effort and persistence. The integration of review center materials with personal college notes was a prevalent and effective strategy among candidates, offering structured guidance and personalized learning. Additionally, emotional resilience, mentorship, effective study techniques, and peer collaboration were identified as crucial components for success, highlighting the importance of comprehensive support systems that address both academic and emotional needs, thereby enhancing students' ability to manage exam stress and achieve their academic goals.

#### **5. Recommendations**

The researchers recommended that educational institutions prioritize the development of personalized study routines, time management skills, and strategies that enhance self-discipline and motivation among students preparing for high-stakes exams. Institutions should emphasize the integration of review center materials with personal study notes to improve study efficiency and understanding of foundational concepts. Comprehensive support systems, including mentorship programs, peer learning opportunities, and resources for emotional well-being, should also be prioritized. These recommendations aim to help students better manage exam stress, improve academic performance, and achieve their educational goals more effectively. Future research could explore the long-term impacts of these strategies on academic success and well-being, as well as additional factors influencing self-discipline, motivation, and support systems.

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## Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare no competing financial, professional, or personal interests.

## Consent for publication

The authors declare that they consented to the publication of this study.

## Authors' contributions

All the authors took part in literature review, analysis and manuscript writing equally.

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